



CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

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March 19, 1998

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

LOCAL INPUT SOUGHT ON CALIFORNIA WATER DECISIONS

SACRAMENTO -- State and federal officials are seeking input from local elected officials on three potential solutions to one of the state's most vexing problems -- resolving the environmental and water management conflicts associated with California's Bay-Delta system.

The Bay-Delta is a critically important part of California's natural environment and economy. It serves as the hub of California's water supply infrastructure, which supplies drinking water for more than 22 million Californians and irrigation water for the state's \$24 billion agricultural industry, which produces, among other things, 45 percent of the nation's fruits and vegetables. It also supports 750 fish and wildlife species, some found nowhere else on the planet. Ultimately, California's trillion-dollar economy, the seventh largest in the world, is at risk if Bay-Delta environmental and water management problems are not resolved.

Today the Bay-Delta is in serious trouble. Over the years, California's need for water from the Bay-Delta system to serve its people and economy has at times competed with environmental needs. Some of the levees that protect local homes, farms and infrastructure are at risk of failure, which could cause disastrous floods, contaminate the water supply and interrupt water deliveries to two-thirds of the state. Some fish and wildlife species are listed as endangered, and there are general concerns over water quality and water supply reliability.

In 1995 Governor Pete Wilson and the Clinton Administration entered into a historic cooperative agreement with the state's leading agricultural, environmental and urban interests to develop a consensus solution to these problems.

CALFED Agencies

California	The Resources Agency	Federal	Environmental Protection Agency	Department of Agriculture
	Department of Fish and Game		Department of the Interior	
	Department of Water Resources		Fish and Wildlife Service	
	California Environmental Protection Agency		Bureau of Reclamation	
	State Water Resources Control Board		U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	
				Natural Resources Conservation Service
				Department of Commerce
				National Marine Fisheries Service

Improving water quality and water supply reliability are two of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program's top priorities. By improving the quality of Delta water, it will be possible to recycle and reuse more Delta water —stretching existing and future supplies. CALFED is also studying new ways of moving water through the Delta that could reduce the cost of treating water for human consumption.

"CALFED is a new way of managing our natural resources," says Lester Snow, executive director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. "It recognizes that these complex problems must be resolved through a collaborative effort that involves federal, state and local governments working on partnerships with the states' environmental, agricultural and business communities."

Working with stakeholders, through public meetings, working groups and a 31-member public advisory council, CALFED has developed three draft solutions for the Bay-Delta. They range in cost from \$9 to \$10.5 billion and would be implemented over a 30-year period. Each contains actions to address ecosystem restoration, water quality, water supply reliability, levee system integrity and watershed management. They differ primarily in how they would move and store water in the system.

"We need more public input on the trade-offs that need to be made with each alternative," says Snow. "Building a new channel to take some of the water around the Delta from the North directly to pumping plants south of the Delta has the greatest benefit to fish, but it is also the most politically challenging. Another potential solution that would make only minor improvements to the way water flows through the Delta would improve the water quality in the Delta itself, but would not significantly improve the system's overall flexibility."

CALFED will seek public input on the three potential solutions this spring when it holds public hearings throughout the state. The 75-day public comment period for the draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement /Environmental Impact Report will begin March 16 and end June 1. For more information call 1-800-900-3587.

"We must work to find a common ground," says Snow. "California's environment, economy and quality of life depend on it."

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Attachments

- Public Hearing Schedule
- Alternatives at a Glance
- CALFED Solution Area Map

(Note to Editors: Additional graphics can be obtained by calling 619-452-0031, ext. 300)